

A MESSAGE FROM

As I near the mid-point of my three year term as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Illinois, it is my privilege to present, on behalf of the Illinois Judicial Branch, the 2003 Annual Report of the Illinois Courts. This report provides an overview of the Illinois Judicial Branch, summarizes major Supreme Court projects initiated during calendar year 2003, reviews the work of the Illinois Judicial Conference and the Court's several committees, and presents a general overview of the funding and operations of the judicial system. Included in the Report is a brief overview of the various divisions and functions of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, which serves as the Supreme Court's administrative arm.

As one of the three pillars of government defined by the Illinois Constitution, the Illinois Judicial Branch is vital to the social well-being of the people of Illinois. I am pleased to report that the Illinois Judicial Branch is strong, and has persevered despite this current time of fiscal shortages and budget cuts. The Judicial Branch, with its state fiscal year 2004 appropriation less than funds actually expended in fiscal year 2002, continues to respond effectively to ever increasing responsibilities and to deliver the highest quality of justice. The state appropriation for funding the Courts is less than 1% of the state's total budget. The number of state paid judicial branch employees decreased by almost 9% this year, some as a result of the state's offered early retirement incentive, and other positions, including census authorized judgeships, have been left unfilled because of fiscal shortages. However, the total number of annual case filings remains fairly constant. Further, the courts in Illinois, which are among the heaviest dockets in the entire nation, disposed of more than 4.3 million cases in calendar year 2002 - a phenomenal achievement. The Judicial Branch of Illinois continues to share the responsibility for the effective and efficient stewardship of state fiscal resources with the Executive and Legislative Branches. We stand as an equal partner with our sister branches of government in contributing to the fiscal well-being of our state. It has been offered that the best bridge to the future is one that is anchored in the proven values of the past. For the Illinois Judicial Branch, the value of highest priority is the continued ability to provide the citizens of Illinois a system of justice anchored in integrity and excellence.

Crucial and fundamental to the efficient operation of Illinois' judicial system is a properly functioning administrative component. The Administrative Office, which functions as an arm of the Supreme Court, is charged with implementation of the Court's policies, initiatives and projects. Under the leadership of Director Cynthia Y. Cobbs, the Administrative Office provides technical and administrative support, training, and other court services to all three levels of Illinois courts and serves as liaison to the Court's various committees. The divisions of the Administrative Office, which are described herein, include the Executive Office, Administrative Services, Court Services, Judicial Education, Judicial Management Information Services and Probation Services.

The year 2003 continued a trend of managing and embracing change through progress and innovation for the Illinois Courts. In the continuing response to the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorists' attacks on America, we see many visible changes in our daily lives at Illinois' courthouses. We have stepped-up security and implemented new routines for such tasks as how to open the daily mail. In May 2003, the Supreme Court approved amendments to Supreme Court Rule 76, Military Service of Judges. The amended Rule permits a 12 month period during which judges, who have been called to actively serve our nation's military, can preserve the rights and benefits attendant to the office of judge.

Technology and public access to the courts and to court records continue to be important issues for the Supreme Court to oversee and manage. With few exceptions, Illinois courtrooms are open to the public,

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and records of court proceedings are generally of public record. Since the Supreme Court's order in 2002 authorizing electronic access to circuit court records, Illinois' citizens have been provided a convenient means to access information even if away from the courthouse. Concomitantly, the Court's order protects the privacy of identifiable interests. As more court records are automated, the Court will continue its vigilance to maintaining the correct balance between privacy considerations and the right of access.

In that regard, advancement in audio and video technology available in portable electronic devices, such as cell phones and laptops, required amendments to Supreme Court Rule 63A(7). The rule, which prohibits the broadcasting, televising or photographing of court or recess proceedings in the trial courts unless authorized by order of the Supreme Court, has been expanded to resolve concerns about unauthorized use of technology in the courtroom. While the court proceedings are open to the public, the instant transmission of spoken words and/or the visual record of proceedings impinges, not only on the personal privacy rights of those engaged in the courtroom, but on the truth-seeking process itself.

In 2002, the Court also authorized the Policy for Implementation of Electronic Filing Pilot Projects in Illinois' trial courts. In September 2003 the Court approved the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit (Du Page County) as the first pilot site for electronic filing. DuPage County, which was the first jurisdiction to submit a pilot proposal, will be working closely with the Administrative Office regarding this initiative. Electronic filing pilot proposals from several other jurisdictions are anticipated to be submitted for approval in calendar year 2004. The use of technology in the courts in the 21st Century is expanding, as it should be, to mutually benefit the public and the judiciary.

The implementation of digital electronic recordation in the circuit courts continued its rapid growth in 2003. New and/or expanded digital systems were installed in Calhoun, Champaign, DeKalb, Jersey, Madison, Massac, McHenry, St. Clair and Will counties, and soon will include the juvenile division of the Cook County Circuit Court. Further, twenty-nine counties have submitted requests to initiate or expand digital recordation systems. The continued expansion of digital recording moves the Court closer to its goal of providing a record in every courtroom, thereby enhancing the entire Illinois court system. The Court also approved the Administrative Regulations for court reporting services in 2003 which provide a comprehensive policy for the work, work rules, essential functions and training for these employees of the Supreme Court.

In 2001 the Supreme Court established a Special Supreme Court Committee on Professionalism. Since its inception, the Committee's work has continued to meet its charge of promoting respectful conduct, as the norm within the legal profession. For 2003, the Court authorized the Committee to conduct orientations in all Illinois law schools. Various justices of the Supreme Court, or representatives of the Supreme Court, joined these events and administered professional oaths to incoming first year law students. The Committee has received strong support from the deans of the nine Illinois law schools. The Committee on Professionalism's sub-committee on Town Meetings and Symposia, in coordination and cooperation with the Illinois State Bar Association, initiated its series of regional meetings throughout the State of Illinois. The specific purpose of these meetings is to raise the consciousness of the bench and bar about professionalism within the legal community.

On January 29, 2002 the Supreme Court established a special committee to study child custody, termination of parental rights, and adoption issues. Public hearings were held by the Committee in 2002

and 2003 in such topical areas as Termination of Parental Rights, Dissolution of Marriage and general custody issues. The culminating event of the Committee's work will be the promulgation of comprehensive rules intended to expedite judicial proceedings in child custody cases.

The Court continued its focus on prioritizing the role of the judiciary in the management of child abuse and neglect cases. In order to establish a statewide and uniform manner to count juvenile abuse, neglect and dependency cases, in September 2003 the Court authorized the Administrative Office to initiate the method of "one child - one case" number system in the Illinois juvenile courts. This uniformity in case identification and counting will provide the foundation for the development of an automated court performance measurement system in the abuse and neglect courts of Illinois. Through the Administrative Office, in consultation with the Judicial Advisory Committee to Illinois' Court Improvement Program (CIP), the Court moved forward in its purposeful distribution of resources from this federally funded initiative. A statewide juvenile law colloquium and over a dozen local "best practices" initiatives were funded, or approved for funding, in 2003. Further, in response to an invitation from the state's child welfare agency, select representatives of the Illinois Judicial Branch participated in interviews as a component of Illinois' September 2003 Child and Family Services Federal Review. On-going collaboration remains a goal of this initiative as Illinois crafts its required "Program Improvement Plan" to be filed by the state's child welfare agency.

The Court's ongoing development of web technology in 2003 further enhanced the efficiency of the Illinois court system. The Court's web site (www.state.il.us/court), introduced in 2000, is continually updated and improved to provide more information on the judicial branch and additional links to numerous legal or justice resources and organizations. Recent statistics reveal that more than 50,000 people visit the Court's web site per month. Enhancements in 2003 included new postings of the following items on the web site:

- The Court's 2002 Annual Report
- Notices of Public Hearings and agendas for Supreme Court Committees and Commissions
- Application for Certificate of Registration under Supreme Court Rule 721
- Application for certificates as Supreme Court Rule 711 Senior Law Student or Law School Graduate
- New pattern jury instructions

The Court remained dedicated to prioritizing and providing comprehensive judicial education resources in 2003. Nearly 600 Illinois judges attended one or more of the Committee on Education's fourteen seminars in 2003. Seventy-four judges attended the week long Advanced Judicial Academy in June 2003, at the University of Illinois College of Law in Champaign. The topic, "Taking Facts Seriously," presented participants with an in-depth exploration of the various dynamics that affect the job of determining facts in a court of law. The Court also presented, through the Committee on Education, a week-long New Judge Seminar, designed to assist all new judges in the critical transition from attorney to jurist. New judges also received individual support and supervision through the mentoring program for new judges, overseen through the Court's Judicial Mentor Committee. In 2003, the Court also finalized plans for the agenda and curriculum for the two sessions of the 2004 Education Conference, which bi-annually draws over 800 Illinois judges to timely educational workshops and training seminars. The Court will continue to provide critical ongoing judicial education opportunities in 2004 through the annual seminar series as well as the aforementioned Education Conference.

The Court also authorized the design and delivery of judicial education opportunities in the arena of multi-disciplinary training for the effective management of "problem-solving courts". Specifically, "problem-solving courts," or more precisely, a problem-solving approach to certain cases, has shown evidence of more effective outcomes in such areas as drug addiction and mental illness. In June 2004, as coordinated by the Administrative Office, a Critical Issues in Drug Courts Conference is being offered to judges throughout the state who are either managing drug courts or contemplating the implementation of one.

The Illinois Judicial Branch administers the state's probation system. Probation continues to prioritize the application of evidenced-based practices through strategies that reduce offender risk, protect and restore communities and victims, and promote competency development and pro-social attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors in the over 100,000 Illinois adults and juveniles who are being supervised on active caseloads. Further, to help promote and accelerate organizational development and change for the delivery of evidenced-based probation programs in Illinois' twenty-two trial courts, in 2003 the National Institute of Corrections identified Illinois, through the Administrative Office, as one of two states (Maine also was selected) to be awarded a three year technical assistance project to assist in implementing systemic changes. In 2003, the Judicial Branch also continued its further commitment to programs and practices that provide alternatives to detention for lower risk juveniles.

I invite you to review the work of the Illinois Judicial Branch and the Administrative Office as contained in the 2003 Annual Report. Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation to the Administrative Office, committee members, and to all who have assisted with the numerous projects and initiatives featured herein. I am confident that these ongoing efforts, which are anchored in our values of integrity and excellence, will prove to be a sturdy and reliable bridge to the future.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mary Ann G. McMorrow". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Mary Ann G. McMorrow
Chief Justice